

BEFORE
THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
DOCKET NO. 2003-53-C - ORDER NO. 2004-315
JULY 2, 2004

IN RE: Application of Transcom Communications, Inc. for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity to Operate as a Reseller of Interexchange Telecommunications Services within the State of South Carolina and for Alternative Regulation.) ORDER) GRANTING) CERTIFICATE FOR) INTEREXCHANGE) AUTHORITY AND) ALTERNATIVE) REGULATION
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This matter comes before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (the “Commission”) by way of the Application of Transcom Communications, Inc. (“Transcom” or the “Company”) requesting a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity authorizing it to operate as a reseller of interexchange telecommunications services within the State of South Carolina. The Company’s Application was filed pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. §58-9-280 (Supp. 2003) and the general regulatory authority of the Commission. By its Application, Transcom also requests alternative regulation of its business services offerings identical to that granted to AT&T Communications in Order Nos. 95-1734 and 96-55 in Docket No. 95-661-C and requested waiver of certain Commission regulations.

The Commission’s Executive Director instructed Transcom to publish, one time, a Notice of Filing in newspapers of general circulation in the areas of the state affected by the Application. The purpose of the Notice of Filing was to inform interested parties of

the Application of Transcom and of the manner and time in which to file the appropriate pleadings for participation in the proceeding. Transcom complied with this instruction and provided the Commission with proof of publication of the Notice of Filing. No Petitions to Intervene or Protests were filed.

A hearing was convened on June 9, 2004, at 11:30 a.m. in the Commission's Hearing Room, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Mignon Clyburn, Chairman, presided. Transcom was represented by Scott Elliott, Esquire. Jocelyn Boyd, Esquire, represented the Commission Staff.

J. Christopher Johns appeared and testified in support of the Application and adopted the prefiled testimony of Mr. Jeff Becker, Transcom's Vice President of Operations and Finance. The record reveals that Transcom is incorporated and headquartered in Irving, Texas and registered to transact business in South Carolina as a foreign corporation. According to Mr. Johns, Transcom proposes to operate as a reseller of intrastate interexchange telecommunications services to the public on a statewide basis and to offer a wide range of "1+" direct dialed interexchange telecommunications services on a resale basis.

Specifically, Transcom seeks authority to provide interLATA, intraLATA, direct dialed services including (1+) service, flat rate service, 800 inbound service and travel cards. Transcom's services will be provided to both residential and business customers and will be offered twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week. The focus clientele for Transcom is business customers, and it does not intend to telemarket its services in South Carolina. Transcom was founded in 1998 and is licensed to do business in 44 of the 50

states. Mr. Johns explained the Company's request for authority, and the record further reveals the Company's services, operations, and marketing procedures.

Mr. Johns also discussed Transcom's technical, financial, and managerial resources to provide the services for which it seeks authority to provide. Mr. Johns offered that Transcom possesses sufficient financial resources to support its operations in South Carolina. A review of the financial documents submitted as an exhibit to the Application reveals a healthy current ratio. The Company has shown a positive cash flow for the past four years and holds a \$5 million line of credit. With regard to management and technical capabilities, Mr. Johns testified that Transcom is currently licensed to provide telecommunications services in 44 states. The Company has not been denied a license in any of the states in which it has applied, has had no licenses revoked in any jurisdictions, nor has it been the subject of any investigations by any governmental regulatory agencies. The Company's Application and Mr. Johns' testimony both evidence that Transcom's management team has extensive experience in both marketing and communications. Mr. Johns also testified that Transcom will operate in accordance with Commission rules, regulations, guidelines, and Commission Orders.

Mr. Johns offered that approval of Transcom's Application would serve the public interest by increasing the level of long distance competition in South Carolina, by providing a high-quality alternative of long distance service, and by increasing consumer awareness of options and services available, thus encouraging the growth and success of competitive services.

After full consideration of the applicable law, the Company's Application, and the evidence presented at the hearing, the Commission hereby issues its findings of fact and conclusions of law:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Transcom is organized as a corporation under the laws of the State of Texas and is authorized to do business as a foreign corporation in the State of South Carolina by the Secretary of State.

2. Transcom is currently licensed to operate as a telecommunications reseller in 44 States and wishes to begin offering its services in the State of South Carolina. Transcom has no reported record of violations of regulatory laws or regulations in the jurisdictions in which it is currently operating.

3. Transcom desires to operate as a reseller of interexchange telecommunications services in South Carolina.

4. We find that Transcom possess the managerial experience and capability to operate as a non-facilities based reseller of interexchange services in South Carolina.

5. We further find, based on the financial records and balance sheets submitted by the Company, that Transcom possesses sufficient financial resources to provide the services as described in its Application.

6. We finally find that the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity to Transcom to operate as a reseller of interexchange telecommunications services in South Carolina would be in the best interest of the citizens of South Carolina by increasing the level of long distance competition in South Carolina, by providing an

alternative of long distance service, and by increasing consumer awareness of options and services available, thereby encouraging growth and success of competitive services.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Commission concludes that Transcom possesses the managerial, technical, and financial resources to provide the interexchange telecommunications services as described in its application.

2. The Commission concludes that Transcom will participate in the support of universally available telephone service at affordable rates to the extent that Transcom may be required to do so by the Commission.

3. The Commission concludes that Transcom will provide services which will meet the service standards of the Commission.

4. The Commission concludes that approval of Transcom's Application to provide intrastate interexchange telecommunications services within South Carolina will serve the public interest by enhancing competition in the State of South Carolina by offering additional service offerings to South Carolina's consumers and by providing for efficient use of existing telecommunications resources.

5. The Commission concludes that the provision of interexchange telecommunications service by Transcom will not adversely impact the public interest.

6. The Commission concludes that the issuance of the authority to provide intrastate interexchange telecommunications services as requested by Transcom and as set forth in its Application, is in the best interests of the citizens of the State of South Carolina.

7. The Commission concludes that a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity should be granted to Transcom to provide intrastate interexchange service via resale.

8. The Commission concludes that Transcom's intrastate interexchange business telecommunications services shall be regulated in accordance with the principles and procedures established for alternative regulation of business service offerings set out in Order Nos. 95-1734 and 96-55 in Docket No. 95-661-C. The Commission has previously granted this "alternative regulation" to competitive intrastate interexchange carriers operating within South Carolina, and the Commission concludes that the competitive marketplace requires the Commission to allow this flexible regulation to those carriers which request it. Specifically, the Commission-approved alternative regulation allows business service offerings, including consumer card services and operator services, to be subject to a relaxed regulatory scheme identical to that granted to AT&T Communications in Order Nos. 95-1734 and 96-55 in Docket No. 95-661-C. However, pursuant to Order No. 2001-997 (Docket No. 2000-407-C), this Commission has modified alternative regulation by the re-imposition of rate caps with regard to certain "operator-assisted calls" where a customer uses a local exchange carrier's calling card to complete calls from locations which have not selected that local exchange carrier as the toll provider. Order No. 2001-997, dated November 8, 2001, imposed a maximum cap of \$1.75 for operator surcharges for such calls, and a maximum cap of \$0.35 related to the flat per-minute rate associated with these calls. Under this relaxed regulatory scheme, tariff filings for business services shall be presumed valid upon filing. The

Commission will have seven (7) days in which to institute an investigation of any tariff filing. If the Commission institutes an investigation of a particular tariff filing within the seven days, the tariff filing will then be suspended until further Order of the Commission.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED, ADJUDGED, AND DECREED THAT:

1. A Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity should be granted to Transcom to provide intrastate interLATA service and to originate and terminate toll traffic within the same LATA, as set forth herein, through the resale of intrastate Wide Area Telecommunications Services (WATS), Message Telecommunications Service (MTS), Foreign Exchange Service, Private Line Service, or any other services authorized for resale by tariffs of carriers approved by the Commission.

2. The Commission adopts a rate design for Transcom for its resale of residential services which includes only maximum rate levels for each tariff charge. A rate structure incorporating maximum rate levels with the flexibility for adjustment below the maximum rate levels has been previously adopted by the Commission. In Re: Application of GTE Sprint Communications Corporation, etc., Order No. 84-622, issued in Docket No. 84-10-C (August 2, 1984).

3. Transcom shall not adjust its residential rates below the approved maximum level without notice to the Commission and to the public. Transcom shall file its proposed rate changes, publish its notice of such changes, and file affidavits of publication with the Commission two weeks prior to the effective date of the changes. However, the public notice requirement is waived, and therefore not required, for

reductions below the maximum cap in instances which do not affect the general body of subscribers or do not constitute a general rate reduction. In Re: Application of GTE Sprint Communications, etc., Order No. 93-638, issued in Docket No. 84-10-C (July 16, 1993). Any proposed increase in the maximum rate level for residential services reflected in the tariff which would be applicable to the general body of the Company's subscribers shall constitute a general ratemaking proceeding and will be treated in accordance with the notice and hearing provisions of S.C. Code Ann. §58-9-540 (Supp. 2003).

4. With respect to Transcom's business services, consumer card, and operator service offerings, the Commission adopts a relaxed regulatory scheme identical to that granted to AT&T Communications in Order Nos. 95-1734 and 96-55 in Docket No. 95-661-C. Under this relaxed regulatory scheme, tariff filings for business services shall be presumed valid upon filing. The Commission will have seven (7) days in which to institute an investigation of any tariff filing. If the Commission institutes an investigation of a particular tariff filing within the seven days, the tariff filing will then be suspended until further Order of the Commission. Any relaxation in the future reporting requirements that may be adopted for AT&T shall apply to Transcom also. These alternative regulation orders were modified by Order No. 2001-997 in Docket No. 2000-407-C which imposed a cap on operator-assisted calls where a consumer uses a local exchange carrier's calling card to complete calls from locations which have not selected the local exchange carrier as their toll provider.

Pursuant to Order No. 2001-997, this Commission modified the alternative regulation by the re-imposition of rate caps with regard to certain operator assisted calls where a customer uses a local exchange carrier's calling card to complete calls from locations which have not selected that local exchange carrier as the toll provider. Order No. 2001-997, dated November 8, 2001, imposed a minimum cap of \$1.75 for operator surcharges for such calls, and a maximum cap of \$0.35 related to the flat per-minute rate associated with these calls. The re-imposition of rate caps for certain operator assisted calls has led to alternative regulation now being known as "modified alternative regulation." The provisions of Order No. 2001-997 and the modification contained therein also apply to Transcom.

5. If it has not already done so by the date of issuance of this Order, Transcom shall file its revised tariff and an accompanying price list within thirty (30) days of receipt of this Order. The revised tariff shall be consistent with the findings of this Order and shall be consistent with the Commission's Rules and Regulations.

6. Transcom is subject to access charges pursuant to Commission Order No. 86-584, in which the Commission determined that for access purposes resellers and facilities-based interexchange carriers should be treated similarly.

7. With regard to the Company's resale of service, an end-user should be able to access another interexchange carrier or operator service provider if the end-user so desires.

8. Transcom shall resell the services of only those interexchange carriers or LECs authorized to do business in South Carolina by this Commission. If Transcom changes underlying carriers, it shall notify the Commission in writing.

9. With regard to the origination and termination of toll calls within the same LATA, Transcom shall comply with the terms of Order No. 93-462, Order Approving Stipulation and Agreement, in Docket Nos. 92-182-C, 92-183-C, and 92-200-C (June 3, 1993), with the exception of the 10-XXX intraLATA dialing requirement, which has been rendered obsolete by the toll dialing parity rules established by the FCC pursuant to the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (See, 47 CFR 51.209). Specifically, Transcom shall comply with the imputation standard as adopted by Order No. 93-462 and more fully described in paragraph 4 of the Stipulation and Appendix B approved by Order No. 93-462.

10. Transcom shall file annual financial information in the form of annual reports and gross receipts reports as required by the Commission. The annual report and the gross receipt report will necessitate the filing of intrastate information. Therefore, Transcom shall keep financial records on an intrastate basis for South Carolina to comply with the annual report and gross receipts filings. The proper form for filing annual financial information can be found at the Commission's website at www.psc.state.sc.us/reference/forms.asp. The title of this form is "Annual Report for Interexchange Companies." This form shall be utilized by the Company to file annual financial information with the Commission and shall be filed no later than **April 1st**.

Commission gross receipts forms are due to be filed with the Commission no later

than **October 1st** of each year. The proper form for filing gross receipts information can be found at the Commission's website at www.psc.state.sc.us/reference/forms.asp, and the appropriate form is entitled "Gross Receipts for Utility Companies."

11. The Company shall, in compliance with Commission regulations, designate and maintain an authorized utility representative who is prepared to discuss, on a regulatory level, customer relations (complaint) matters, engineering operations, tests and repairs. In addition, the Company shall provide to the Commission in writing the name of the authorized representative to be contacted in connection with general management duties as well as emergencies which occur during non-office hours. Transcom shall file the names, addresses and telephone numbers of these representatives with the Commission within thirty (30) days of receipt of this Order. The "Authorized Utility Representative Information" form can be found at the Commission's website at www.psc.state.sc.us/reference/forms.asp; this form shall be utilized for the provision of this information to the Commission. Further, the Company shall promptly notify the Commission in writing if the representatives are replaced.

12. The Company is directed to comply with all Rules and Regulations of the Commission, unless a regulation is specifically waived by the Commission.

13. At the hearing, Transcom requested a waiver of 26 Code Regs. 103-610 (Supp. 2003), which requires that records required by the Commission's Rules and Regulations be maintained in South Carolina. The record reveals that Transcom's principal headquarters will be located in Irving, Texas. Transcom requests permission to maintain its books and records at its headquarters in that city and state. The Commission

finds Transcom's requested waiver reasonable and understands the difficulty presented to Transcom should the waiver not be granted. The Commission therefore grants the requested waiver that Transcom be allowed to maintain its books and records at its principal headquarters. However, Transcom shall make available its books and records at all reasonable times upon request by the Commission or the Commission Staff, and Transcom shall promptly notify the Commission if the location of its books and records changes.

14. Transcom also requests that it be exempt from record keeping policies that require a carrier to maintain its financial records in conformance with the Uniform System of Accounts (USOA). The USOA was developed by the FCC as a means of regulating telecommunications companies subject to rate base regulation. As a competitive carrier, Transcom maintains its book of accounts in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). GAAP is used extensively by interexchange carriers. Moreover, Transcom asserts that because it utilizes GAAP, the Commission will have a reliable means by which to evaluate Transcom's operations and assess its financial fitness. Accordingly, Transcom hereby requests an exemption from the USOA requirements. We grant the Company's request for the reasons stated above.

15. Each telecommunications company certified in South Carolina is required to file annually the Intrastate Universal Service Fund (USF) worksheet. This worksheet provides the Commission Staff information required to determine each telecommunications company's liability to the State USF fund. The Intrastate USF worksheet is due to be filed annually no later than August 15th.

16. As a condition for offering prepaid calling card and long distance services, Transcom is required, and agrees, to post a bond of \$5,000.00 with the Commission in the form of Certificate of Deposit or Surety Bond prior to commencing the sale of such cards in this state. This requirement may be reviewed on an annual basis if so requested by the Company.

17. This Order shall remain in full force and effect until further notice by this Commission.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION:

/s/
Randy Mitchell, Chairman

ATTEST:

/s/
Bruce F. Duke, Executive Director

(SEAL)